

Consumer Protections

- ◆ You cannot be disconnected from local or long distance phone service for nonpayment of 900 # calls.
- ◆ Local telephone companies must offer a 900 # block.
- ◆ Toll-free numbers cannot be used to transfer the call to a 900 # in the United States.
- ◆ 900 #s must be listed separately on your billing.
- ◆ Information and entertainment services must use a 900 # unless you subscribe to a monthly service.

What if something's amiss?

Write: PUC
State Capitol Building
500 E Capitol
Pierre SD 57501
Call: 1-800-332-1782
Fax: (605) 773-3809

*400 copies of this brochure were printed
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Consumer Tips

- ◆ Be aware that charges are always incurred when you listen to or participate in a program offered through a 900 #, even if you are calling to claim a “free” prize.
- ◆ Be aware that information services are rarely completely free if they are provided over toll-free numbers. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- ◆ Be careful in making all long distance calls, accepting collect calls, or accepting unsolicited offers from information providers.
- ◆ Be aware that not all advertisements for information services disclose the charges you will be assessed.
- ◆ Caution children or others who make phone calls from your telephone line about charges associated with calls to information services.
- ◆ Consider getting a 900 # block through your local phone company.
- ◆ Examine your phone bill every month for unusual charges.

Schemes, Scams, & Flim-flams



Telephone Tricks

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
State Capitol Building
500 E Capitol
Pierre SD 57501
Call: 1-800-332-1782
www.state.sd.us/puc

“Pay Per Call” and Information Services

- ◆ “Pay per call” and information services may provide very valuable services ranging from medical, stock market reports, sports and product information. These services are typically offered through 900 numbers and are much more expensive than regular charges. The charges may be either a per-minute assessment or a flat fee charge.
- ◆ The services which have caused the most problems are the “adult” services and psychic lines. These services are legal; however, they may lead to deceptive advertising and billing practices such as collect call-backs, instant calling cards, monthly telephone subscription charges, and international phone charges which are all described later in this brochure.

Collect Call-backs

- ◆ A person may call a number from an ad which goes to an answering machine. The answering machine gives instructions to leave a message for someone to call back. When the call back is made it is usually a collect call which is charged at a much higher rate.

- ◆ To avoid these charges, either don’t leave your number on the answering machine (ask to have information sent to you) or don’t accept the call when it is returned.

“Instant” Calling Cards

- ◆ A person may respond to an advertisement and be offered a calling card which may be used for immediate access to the advertised information. Frequently, minor children establish this type of an account which is billed to the phone number from which the initial call was made. Little verification is done to ensure that the person establishing the card has the authority to do so.

“Free” Psychic Services

- ◆ Advertisements which offer free services of a psychic may not disclose that only the psychic advise is free - you have to pay for the telephone call.

Tricky Area Codes

- ◆ Some international area codes look just like numbers used within the United States but have much higher prices and less consumer protection. Beware of area codes: 809, 758, 664, or 011. Some tricks used by international callers include:
 - ⇒ calls left on answering machines about sick or injured relatives from someone you don’t know or a number you don’t recognize.
 - ⇒ unfamiliar or suspicious messages left on your pager.
 - ⇒ ads for mystery shoppers, mystery movie goers or employment ads.
 - ⇒ letters indicating that your credit rating is in danger.
- ◆ If you receive a suspicious message, dial “0” and ask the operator the location of the area code before returning the call.

